



1 of 9

frank MILLER

HELL and BACK

A **SIN CITY** love story





frank **MILLER** *story & art*
lynn **VARLEY** *cover colors*

diana **SCHUTZ** *editor*
gary **GRAZZINI** *designer*
mike **RICHARDSON** *publisher*





IT'S ONE OF THOSE
CLEAR, COOL NIGHTS
THAT DROPS INTO
THE MIDDLE OF
SUMMER LIKE A
GIFT FROM ON
HIGH. THE SHORT
HAIRS ON YOUR
ARMS CARRY AN
ELECTRIC TINGLE,
TEASING, HINTING
AT A COMING
STORM.



THE WIND RISES IN
WILD GUSTS, RATTLING
WINDOWS, FORCING
HOT DOG VENDORS TO
WRESTLE WITH THE
UMBRELLAS ON THEIR
CARTS, RIPPING DRIED
TREE BRANCHES
FREE AND SCATTER-
ING THEM LIKE OLD
BONES.

IT'S NO KIND OF
NIGHT TO STAY
IN THE CITY.

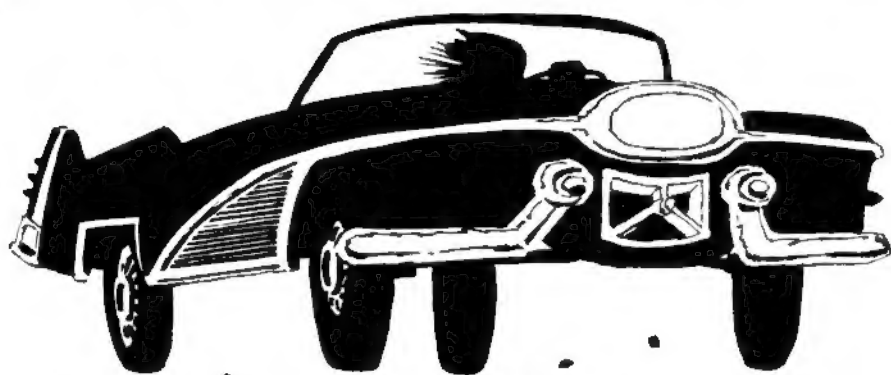


IT'S NO KIND OF
NIGHT TO STAY
INSIDE **ANYTHING.**



A FEW MILES OUT MY
NECK UNKINKS AND MY
SHOULDER SHIFTS,
SETTLING MORE COM-
FORTABLY IN ITS
SOCKET. THE BEES IN
MY HEAD QUIET DOWN.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR
MY *RENT*, I
WOULDN'T HAVE A
CARE IN THE
WORLD.



NOBODY TO BLAME
BUT MYSELF I KNEW
WHAT SORT OF CLIENT
I WAS DEALING WITH.

FOR A FULL
MINUTE PURVIS
SHOOK HIS
HEAD AND
SHOOK HIS
HEAD AND
SHOOK HIS
HEAD...

...THEN HE
LET OUT WITH
A LITTLE-BOY
WHIMPER...





YOU PUT
A SHEET ON
HER.

I HATE TO BE
THE ONE TO TELL
YOU THIS, KID--IT'S A
TERRIBLE THING TO
SAY ABOUT A GUY--BUT
YOU ARE **NOT** A
TEAM PLAYER.

HERE I
SEND YOU
BIBI--A PANTS-
EXPLODER LIKE **BIBI**!
--AND YOU DROP A
SHEET ON HER. JESUS.
WHY DIDN'T YOU GO
WHOLE **HOG** AND PUT
A **BAG** ON HER
HEAD?

I SHOULD'VE
SMELLED TROUBLE
COMING WHEN SHE
TOLD ME YOU DIDN'T
EVEN MAKE A
PANTS AT
HER.

DON'T GET
ME WRONG. IT'S
A **PRETTY** SHEET.
BUT MY MAGAZINE
AIN'T IN THE BUSINESS
OF SELLING **SHEETS**.
OR **BUYING** THEM,
EITHER. **IF IT**
DON'T GIVE ME
A STIFFY, I
DON'T BUY
IT!

I WANT
WHAT I
WANT!

YEAH.

I KNOW
WHAT YOU
WANT.



OH,
BABY!
INSTANT
STIFFY!

YOU'RE
A **GENIUS,**
KID!

"GENIUS." DIDN'T
THAT WORD **MEAN**
SOMETHING ONCE?

THE FUNNY THING IS, THAT
ONE HAD BEEN A WHOLE LOT
EASIER TO PAINT THAN
THE ONE WITH THE **SHEET**.

IT WAS
EASY.

I'D FINALLY
MADE THE
GRADE.

I'D FINALLY
PROVEN I
WAS A **TEAM**
PLAYER.

I DON'T KNOW WHETHER
TO **LAUGH** OR **CURSE**
MYSELF. SO I DO A
LITTLE OF **BOTH**.

THE **CHECK** WAS
ALMOST IN MY **HANDS**.

MY **RENT** WAS AS
GOOD AS **PAID**.

LORD ONLY
KNOWS
WHAT GOT
INTO ME.

GARKK!

I HADN'T **PLANNED** ON
DOING ANYTHING **STUPID**.
MY **HANDS** MOVED ALL
ON THEIR **OWN**.

NUTS. IT'S NOT
THE END OF THE
WORLD. THERE'LL
BE OTHER
CHANCES.

NOT WITH
PURVIS--

YOU
**SON OF A
BITCH!**

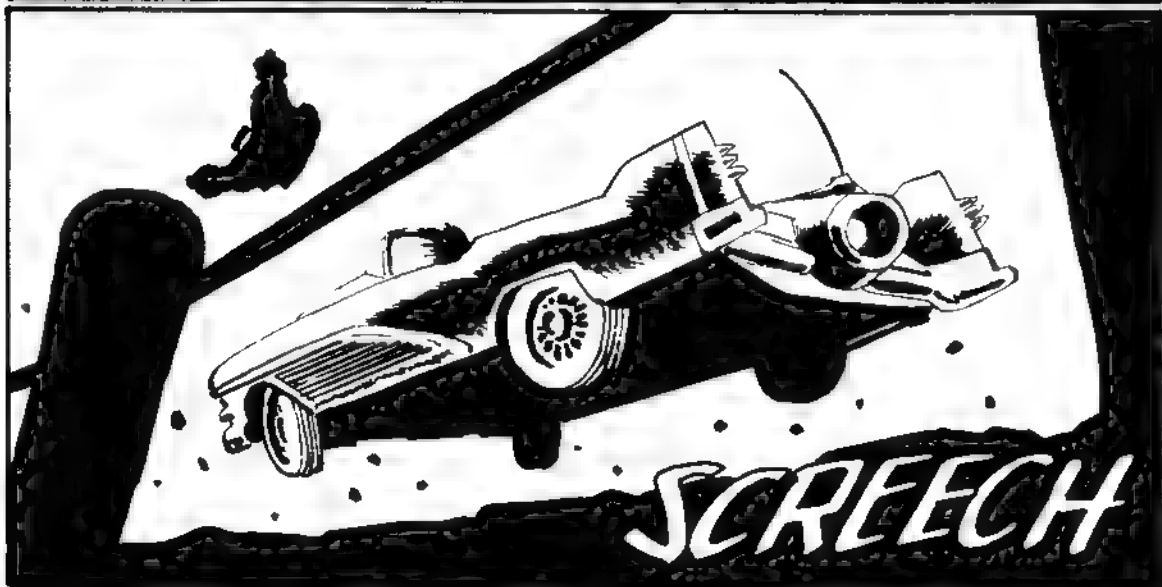
--BUT THERE'LL
BE OTHER
CHANCES.

IN THE MEANTIME,
LANGER'S WILL
PROBABLY TAKE
ME BACK. I'M A
DECENT ENOUGH
SHORT-ORDER
COOK.

IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S
THE END OF THE
WORLD.





















SHE'S A LITTLE
HEAVIER THAN
SHE LOOKS

STRONG
BODY



SHE'S NOT
BREATHING



STRONG BODY
SHE'S IN GOOD
SHAPE

SHE CAN
MAKE IT.

COME ON,
WOMAN

BREATHE.

KOFF

HNH?

RELAX
DON'T TRY
TO GET UP
I'LL CARRY
YOU

SHE
SLEEPS

BREATHING
STEADILY
NOW

SHE'S OUT OF
DANGER.



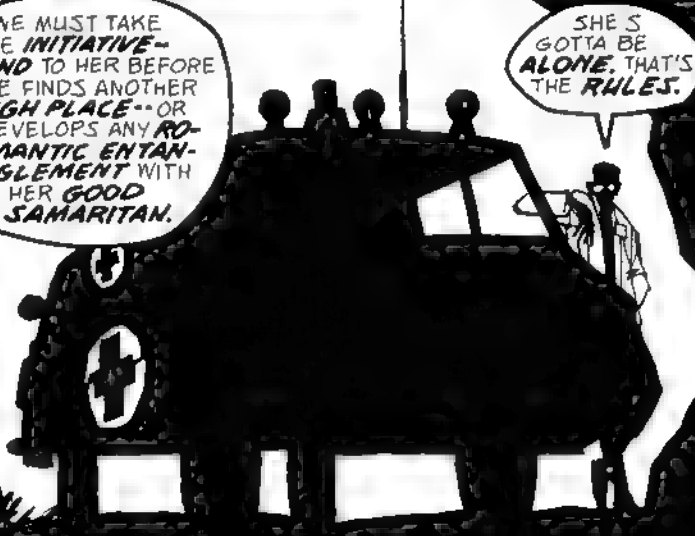
SHE'S ALIVE.
BUT SHE'S NOT
ALONE.

AND SHE'S
SUICIDAL. A
DAMN JUMPER.
THAT WASN'T IN HER
FILE. THERE WASN'T
A CLUE. DAMN IT
WE ALMOST LOST
HER. DAMN IT
THERE WASN'T A
CLUE.



QUIT
YOUR
WHINING.

WE MUST TAKE
THE INITIATIVE--
TEND TO HER BEFORE
SHE FINDS ANOTHER
HIGH PLACE--OR
DEVELOPS ANY RO-
MANTIC ENTAN-
GLEMENT WITH
HER GOOD
SAMARITAN.



SHE'S
GOTTA BE
ALONE. THAT'S
THE RULES.



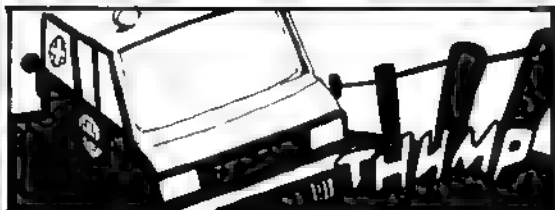
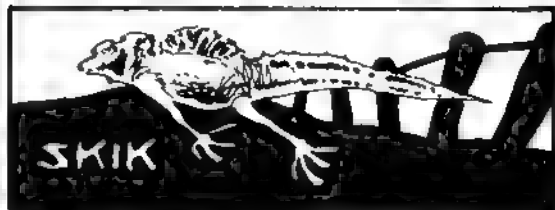
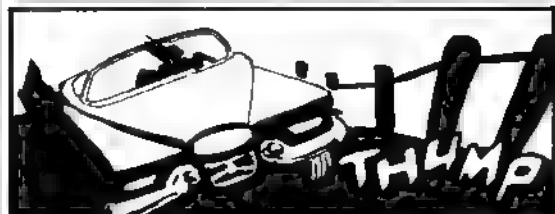
WATCH YOUR GRAMMAR,
DOCTOR FREDRIC. AND
DO AS YOU'RE TOLD. I'LL
MAKE CERTAIN SHE'S
ALONE--ONE WAY OR THE
OTHER.

WE MAKE
OUR MOVE
TONIGHT.



WE
GOTTA WAIT
AS LONG AS
WE CAN.

WE DON'T
WANNA GET
ON THE WRONG
SIDE OF THE
COLONEL.



...SHE
SLIPPED OFF
A **CLIFF**,
INTO THE
BAY.

SHAKING
LIKE A **LEAF**,
THE POOR DEAR
HYPOTHERMIA,
FROM THE
LOOK OF
HER

GET
HER **IN**
HERE,
BOY!

MRS MENDOZA
IS MY **LAND-
LADY**. SHE'S A
RETIRED **NURSE**.
SHE'S ALSO A
SWEETHEART.
SHE DOESN'T
EVEN **MENTION**
THE **RENT**.

HERE,
DARLING. LET'S
GET YOU OUT OF
THESE WET CLOTHES
AND INTO A NICE,
WARM **BATH**.

SHE'S QUITE
THE **BEAUTY**,
WALLACE. AND I'LL
BET YOU A NICKEL TO A
DOUGHNUT SHE'LL BE
RIGHT **GRATEFUL**
FOR WHAT YOU
DONE



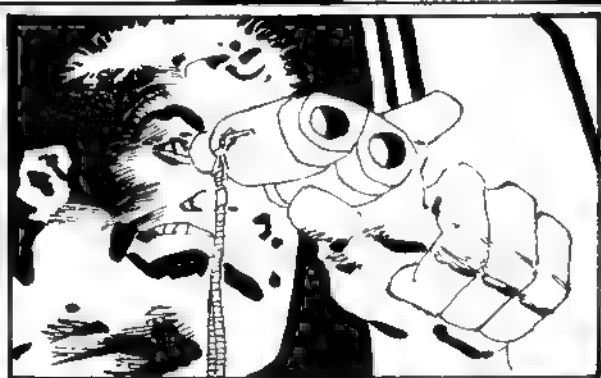
ALL I'M SAYING IS
IT WOULDN'T **KILL**
YOU TO **ASK** HER
FOR HER **PHONE**
NUMBER.

I HEAD ON UP TO MY
LOFT I TRY TO GET
SOME WORK DONE

FORGET
IT

TOO
RESTLESS.

THAK



THOK

KREEK



THANK
YOU

SURE. I JUST
DID WHAT ANY-
BODY--WHERE
YOU **GOING?**



I FIGURE I'VE
CAUSED PLEN-
TY **ENOUGH**
TROUBLE

YOU
CAN'T HIT
THE STREET
DRESSED
LIKE
THAT.

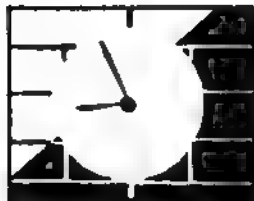


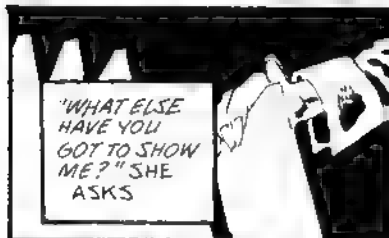
IT'S ALL YOUR
LANDLADY
HAD THAT
DIDN'T SLIDE
RIGHT **OFF**
ME

LOOK THROUGH MY
STUFF. THERE'S
BOUND TO BE SOME-
THING YOU CAN WEAR
THEN I'LL GIVE YOU
A RIDE HOME

THANKS AGAIN.
I'LL JUST BE A
SECOND.







LOOK AT THE
TIME! STILL
UP FOR THAT
DRINK?

SURE LOVE
TO LET'S
GO.

HER NAME'S **ESTHER**. SHE'S
AN **ACTRESS** WHO'S ENJOYED
ABOUT AS MUCH PROFESSIONAL
SUCCESS AS I HAVE--AND WITH
ABOUT THE SAME QUALITY OF
CLIENTS.

IT'S THIS ROTTEN
TOWN IT SOILS
EVERYBODY IN IT

NO, IT'S NOT THE **PARTS**
THEY OFFER. I'M HARDLY
IN ANY POSITION TO PICK
AND **CHOOSE**. IT'S THAT
THE ONLY ROUTE TO THE
SOUND STAGE INCLUDES
A STOP ON THE **COUCH**,
IF YOU CATCH MY DRIFT

SO, **SOLDIER**--
HOW ABOUT YOU TELL
ME A **WAR STORY**?

WHAT,
ARE YOU
PSYCHIC?

THANKS,
DARRYL
YOU'RE A
PRINCE BUY
ME A
DRINK,
WILL YOU?

NOT **PSYCHIC**
JUST **NOSEY**.
I SNEAKED A
LOOK AT YOUR
MEDAL.

SORRY

THE **CONGRESSIONAL**
MEDAL OF HONOR.
YOU DON'T GET ONE OF
THOSE FOR JUST
SHOWING UP.

WHAT'D
YOU
DO?

THAT'S
A LONG
STORY

I'VE GOT ALL
NIGHT.

I TELL HER WHAT
HAPPENED THE
SHORT VERSION

ALL
BY **YOUR-
SELF?** THAT'S
AMAZING!

IT WASN'T
THAT BIG A DEAL
I JUST HAPPENED TO
BE THERE ANYBODY
ELSE WOULD'VE
DONE THE SAME

...FILED FOR
DIVORCE. THE
BUM. EVEN TRIED
TO GET CUSTODY
OF MY **BOY**. CAN
YOU BELIEVE IT?

PEGGY,
I SWEAR
TO YOU--IF I
COULD GET
MY **HANDS**
ON THAT
CREEP, I'D
BREAK HIM
IN **HALF!**

SURE
~~WENT BACK~~
TO GET BACK
TO THE
STATES,
THOUGH



ANYTHING
FOR YOU,
PEGGY YOU
KNOW I'VE
ALWAYS HAD
A **THING**
FOR YOU

BUY ME
ANOTHER
DRINK.

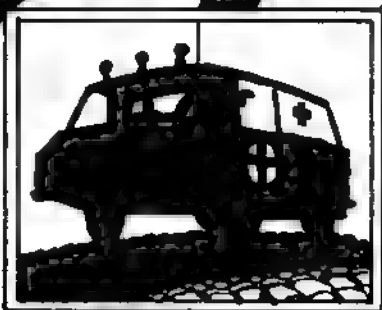
ESTHER--
IT'S NONE OF
MY BUSINESS,
DET.

WHY DID
I **JUMP?** AW
LET'S NOT
SPOIL THINGS
WITH **THAT**. NOT
JUST NOW!
OKAY? LET'S
JUST SAY YOU
SAVED ME FROM
MAKING A **BIG**
MISTAKE

AND LET'S
TAKE A WALK
THOSE TWO
ARE MAKING
ME **SICK**







F4PP

CONTINUED

WRITE TO:

BLAM!

c/o DARK HORSE COMICS
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OR 97222
E-mail: dianas@darkhorse.com

Rarely in comics have two words in a comic book caused such a ruckus. Readers of my and Lynn Varley's 300 may recall this scene . . .



. . . and one reader's response to it. Since then, a whole bunch more readers have jumped on the subject. It's not every day a guy gets a chance to put together a letters column concerning sexual practices in Ancient Greece, so here we go . . .

Miryam Librán Moreno
libran@jet.es

I am an Ancient Greek teacher from Spain. I take the liberty of writing to you because I have read a blatantly false charge made against you, signed by a Patrick Marcel, that was published in 300 #4, and I feel that you didn't defend yourself quite as well as you should, given the fact that you were right—not him.

Patrick Marcel pretty much accused you of not being aware of Spartan homosexuality because your Leonidas disparaged Athenians as "boy-lovers." He goes on to say, and I am quoting, that "anybody even remotely knowledgeable with ancient Greece knows also that Spartans were as much boy-lovers as the effete Athenians. Indeed, the cohesion of their army was due to the fact that the soldiers were lovers. So this insult to Athenians rings glaringly out of place." Well, this gentleman hasn't got one fact right. Not even one.

a) Spartans weren't boy-lovers. They were *man*-lovers. There is a deep difference in that. Spartan society, in stark contrast with contemporary Dorian practice (for instance, Cretan Dorians), discouraged adult males from loving boys, but encouraged adult males to form sexual bonds with other

adult males. Athenians were boy-lovers because of pleasure and because in Athens the role of women was as poor and despised as nowadays in Taliban Afghanistan. But Spartans loved their women and were not afraid to show the rest of the world (an unbelievably capital offense, according to Athenian moral standards; witness Xenophon's *Symposium*); and, for good measure, homosexuality was one of the State's ruses to isolate their males from their rightful family and integrate them in their surrogate family: their military unit. So it is absolutely right that Leonidas should disparage Athenians as boy-lovers, since an Athenian would be a pedophile for pleasure.

b) The cohesion of the Spartan army was due to intensive, agonizing, almost maiming training in discipline and battle formation, beginning at age seven, and not remotely due to the sexual attraction of the soldiers.

c) This gentleman has mistaken the Spartan army with Epaminodas' Theban army, a whole century after Thermopylae. Epaminodas, a Theban general from the fourth century, organized an elite battalion he called "Sacred battalion," formed exclusively by couples of lovers. So, mistaking the Theban army for the Spartan army is as accurate as mistaking the Red Army for the Polish army during the Cold War.

I would have sent this to the e-mail address of the writer of such blatant, glaring historic disinformation, but I'd rather you, Mr. Miller, put this to the best use you find. On a personal note, I would use this information against those who twist history in a ridiculous effort to cash in on the past to further their untenable positions. Such is the case with homosexuals who think that Greece was paradise lost.

Alex Prouty
prouty@andrews.edu

"...Anybody even remotely knowledgeable with ancient Greece..." should know that a remote bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing.

Let's get down to it.

Information on the Spartan way of life is sketchy, and historians rely on the accounts of others—not Spartans—for most of the information illuminating ancient Sparta. The Spartans were almost intensely xenophobic, carefully screening who was allowed within their borders and what those visitors were allowed to see.

When describing themselves, however, Spartans often tended to brag about their fidelity to their wives, despite living conditions, distance, and time. Infidelity was frowned upon, and single members of either gender were punished and ridiculed.

Homosexuality was indeed completely acceptable to much if not most of Greece.

Homosexuality in the ranks was far from unheard of, but it was Thebes, not Sparta, that based its military units on soldier-couples fighting side by side.

The romantic love of the other Greek city-states seems to have been, for the most part, derided in Sparta. The Spartans' only statue of Aphrodite was blindfolded and fettered.

The truth is, historians debate this information back and forth. Sparta is quite the enigma—its government a bizarre amalgam, its philosophy a mixture of equality and subjugation, its people a hodgepodge of what might now be considered ultraconservative and profligately liberal.

Personally, I have little interest in proving or disproving the existence of homosexuality in the Spartan ranks. As a history teacher, however, I must take issue with the sweeping generalities so often pasted over the intricacies of history. Blanket statements should never be issued in regard to the past.

As to Mr. Miller's research, I find it startlingly impeccable—down to the long-haired Spartans and the Greek lambda on their shields. Why, the only thing missing is their bronze corselet—but how then could we see all those "John Wayne-type, 100% full red-blooded" chests? As for your timing, well, it coincides as beautifully with my lesson plans as Xerxes' invasion did with the August Cameia! Thank you.

Michael Lea
Mlea@ipa.net

I am not a Steve Miller fan. I've never cared much for Daredevil or Batman, and *Sin City* is just not my type of comic book, so I haven't had much exposure to his more famous efforts. I have had enough, though, to know that Miller does quality work. It's just not usually the kind of story I look for in a comic. Not so with *300*, however. I love historical fiction, and I've done a lot of research on fifth-century Athens, so I was very curious to see if Miller had done his homework. Happily, I have enjoyed the series (so far), and I think that Mr. Miller has researched his story fully. However, Patrick Marcel, the fellow whose letter appeared in #4's letters column, has not. I don't write to comics all that often, and despite my approval of the story and art, I would not have written to this one if this fellow's ignorant comments didn't irritate me so much.

Patrick Marcel takes offense at Leonidas referring to Athenians as "boy-lovers" and claims that "anybody even remotely knowledgeable with ancient Greece" would know that the Spartans practiced homosexuality, and therefore would never make such a remark. After all, we all know that all ancient cultures that included homosexuality regarded it in exactly the same manner as twentieth-century-American "Gay Pride" groups do. I'm sure that if Leonidas were to let slip that "boy-lover" remark, those Spartans would follow Marcel's lead. They'd be writing their congressmen, arranging boycotts, and insisting that poor Leonidas was just afraid of his own suppressed longings. And this guy has the nerve to call *300* "so much Hollywood-style revisionism."

Unfortunately, "remotely knowledgeable with ancient Greece" is the very kindest way to describe Marcel's understanding of the subject. The situation was much more complex than he presents it—and probably much more so than he understands. I don't claim to have a perfect understanding of ancient Greek culture, but at least I've done more than read a "Gay Moments in History" pamphlet; I know and admit to the limits on my knowledge.

First, a technical point: Leonidas said "boy-lovers." Is Marcel saying that we should all be shocked that Leonidas disapproves of men having sex with young boys? That, in fact, expressing this makes him a "homophobe"? Nothing was said about the practice of homosexuality in general. This may seem minor and nit-picky, but it isn't. In Athens men were expected to pursue young boys. Much like men pursuing younger women in our culture, it was a mark of status to be beautiful enough to be desired, but a loss of status to give in and have sex with the suitor. In fact, while man-to-man intimacy was common, it was also considered "slutty" and diminishing for a man to allow himself to be penetrated. This just scratches the surface; it was a very different culture, not the San Francisco with togas that Marcel seems to believe in. The point is that it's entirely realistic for the Spartans to sneer at the Athenians for their "boy-loving" ways, even though they probably did enjoy sexual relations with their peers. And even if the Spartans behaved exactly as the Athenians, it is entirely believable that they would still make fun of them. The two cultures were so competitive that they might easily condemn each other for things they themselves did in private.

And "the cohesion of their army was due to the fact that the soldiers were lovers"? Please! How about the fact that they trained for it their whole lives?

The only "ugly subtext" is that every group in America with an agenda thinks it has some sort of Constitutionally guaranteed right to suppress and censor anything that clashes with the canned "history" they peddle. There are plenty of us out there who enjoy fiction derived from history, not the fairy tales told in modern politics. Keep producing works like *300*, and we'll keep buying them.

Jim Kelly
JimK0403@aol.com

Just a quick note to let you know that I completely agree with your comments regarding Patrick Marcel's letter in this issue's letters column.

I'm a gay man, and, yes, I don't like to read, hear, or be aware of anti-gay comments.

I also don't like to hear racist, sexist, or ageist comments, among others. But when these comments come from a piece of fiction, the time, place, and characters have to be considered. It doesn't make me appreciate the comments any, but it does help me understand the characters and situations. I also agree with you that to rewrite or re-present history in a more "politically correct" manner is wrong: while history does often repeat itself, how can anything ever be learned from it if it is "sugar-coated" or edited so the "offensive" parts are omitted?

Please keep on writing and creating characters that have different viewpoints than mine and yours: it makes it that much more entertaining and challenging for me to read, and I'm sure it makes it more challenging and fun for you to write.

Patrick Marcel
Manticor@cyberstation.fr

I was pleasantly surprised to see my letter published in the latest *300*, even if my comments were largely positive. So far, the letters page hasn't been rife with dissenting voices, to say the least. As for your explanation about *that* sentence: clever, but it doesn't work. You see, half-witted and blinkered by political correctness though I am, I've basically understood that *300* is your version of the battle of Thermopylae—your depiction of Xerxes as poster child for body-piercing, the Spartans wearing those cute little G-strings in battle, or the Immortals as a cool army of masked warriors—à la *Scream*. No problem there. That's what we want to see: your rendition of it. Unfortunately, that means there must be completeness in the work. We can depend only on what you show and tell us.

There's no reason to believe that Leonidas is being hypocritical in that Athenian remark, since nothing in the whole work refers to Spartans having homosexual inclinations (unless walking about in the nude between males, in the summer, in a hot, southern country and a pre-industrial civilization should be considered a hint; it wouldn't be on many beaches in Europe). The way things stand, we have a homophobic remark all by itself with no context to qualify it.

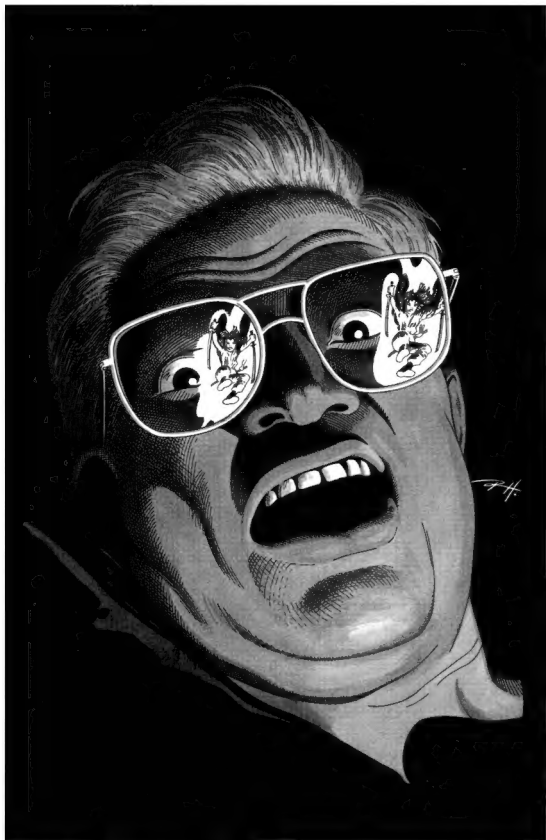
Hence, I still stand by my interpretation as valid from the context. But, of course, you were right to pounce on that handful of lines to deduce I was making that assumption purely on a knee-jerk basis, and I had not read (or remembered) the huge body of work where you have shown gays who weren't at best pathetic creatures to be pitied. (Lesbians don't count, as they are cool sex fantasies.)

As for political correctness, please! These days, everybody can get away with murder just by yelling very loudly, "Help! I'm being oppressed by the thought police" every time there's criticism. Whoever invented political correctness should get a medal from the Moral Right. It's a cozy concept, and it works every time.

On a knee-jerk basis.
I still enjoy and appreciate *300*.
But just not every detail of it.

You've got a point about "political correctness." It is an awfully easy term to throw around, and it's a pretty cheap shot. The term is overdue for retirement. But let's keep in mind that it was introduced not by the "Moral Right," but by the very folks who now complain about its use. The Orwellian sound of it backfired.

"Pathetic creatures to be pitied"? Man, where'd *that* crack come from?



GALLERY

RUSS **HEATH**



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